

TITLE: 150,000 HOMES TARGETED IN LEAD ABATEMENT DRIVE
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Armed with more than \$9 million in federal funds, the city of Cleveland this year began an extensive lead abatement project aimed at identifying and addressing lead hazards in Cleveland residences.

Many of the more than 150,000 homes targeted for the program are rental properties, city officials say. Renters are encouraged to contact the city's Department of Public Health Lead Program if they are concerned about lead-based paint in their homes.

Fetuses and children younger than 6 are at risk when their blood has 10 micrograms or more of lead per deciliter of blood, according to the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta.

A common source of lead is lead-based paint in older residences and lead dust.

More than 1.7 million children in the United States have unsafe levels of lead in their blood. As a result, lead poisoning is the No. 1 environmental health hazard for young children.

Lead-based paint can be found in most homes and apartments built before 1978, when the use of lead-based paint was banned.

Federal officials say 64 million dwellings, all built before 1978, contain lead-based paint, although it can be controlled safely by using simple, low-cost, common-sense procedures. Families renovating older structures and low-income families living in dilapidated housing are particularly at risk.

In Cleveland, 85 percent of the residences were built before 1978 and have lead paint in them, city officials say.

Cleveland's HUD Lead Abatement Project, supported by funds from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, is a three-pronged program that relies on partnerships with community-based organizations, including Environmental Health Watch, Cuyahoga

Community College's Center for Environmental Education and Training, Cleveland Housing Network, a nonprofit housing agency, and various city departments, social services and community development corporations.

The Community Lead Exposure Prevention Project is an outreach education program that includes blood screening and housing inspection in target neighborhoods. Parents of children who suffer from lead poisoning are encouraged to participate. More than 150,000 homes will receive exterior inspections through the program and about 50,000 children under age 6 will be screened.

The Intensive Neighborhood Project conducts low-level lead abatement projects in high-risk areas and focuses on young children. Community development corporations manage the funds allocated for addressing lead-contaminated soil and lead in several homes.

The Scattered Site Project makes grants available to 80 low-income Cleveland homeowners per year to assist in efforts to address higher-level lead contamination.

The department also has been involved in cases taken to Cleveland Housing Court, including a recent civil case in which a jury awarded a woman \$3,000 after finding her ex-landlord guilty of evicting her because she complained about lead hazards in her apartment.

The damages were awarded because the eviction violated the Ohio landlord/tenant law, which prohibits landlords from evicting tenants because they complain about conditions in their apartments.

But, city health officials say they also cite property owners for code violations, including lead-based paint problems and continue to follow-up cases after they are heard by the court.

Meanwhile, the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the **Environmental Protection Agency** in March issued rules requiring property sellers and landlords to disclose known lead-based paint hazards in homes and give buyers or tenants any reports from tests performed before the sale or leasing of a property.

For more information about the city's program, call 664-2175.
Occupancy standards

A committee of the Ohio House of Representatives has delayed a vote on an amendment to the state Fair Housing Act establishing occupancy standards pending changes that would make it more acceptable to fair housing advocates.

The bill, which limits the number of people who can live in one apartment to two per bedroom, is supported by the apartment industry. The standards are needed to prevent overcrowding, the industry says.

Fair housing advocates oppose the legislation on the grounds that it would eliminate many options for low-income families. Those families often put more than two children in a bedroom.

Meanwhile, the Joint Legislative Program of the National Multi Housing Council and the National Apartment Association is lobbying in support of legislation in Congress that would prevent the Department of Housing and Urban Development from challenging occupancy standards established by housing providers that are applied consistently and are in compliance with state standards.